FABLES & FAIRYTALES
ILLUSTRATED FOR CHILDREN

Exhibition of illustrated children's books from the collection in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto
December 1973

"The usual Way of Teaching
by Tales and Fables, is
so pleasant and instructive,
and is so many times over
and over recommended by
the greatest and wisest Men
of all Ages, as that which
makes the deepest Impression
on the Mind, and comes most
lively to the Understanding,
not only of Men, but even of
Children, that it would be
lost Labour to insist on its
commendation."

Aesop's Fables (ca. 1761)

Picture books for children are taken for granted today all over the world. Fairytales and nursery-rhymes have been told for many generations; yet few people realize that those tales and ditties were originally not intended for the ears of infants at all. The same is true of legends which were passed down through the centuries. As a matter of fact, children themselves began to pick out their favourites from the stories they overheard at gatherings of their elders, asking again and again for those most appealing to their imagination. The storytellers gradually adapted the texts to the ages of their listeners. The moral standards upheld by society at any given time, also influenced their presentation to the young generation.

Examples of this development are shown in this exhibition.

FABLES AND EARLY PICTURE BOOKS (case 1)

ORBIS SENSUALIUM PICTUS (1777) by Johann Amos Comenius (Komensky), translated into English by Charles Hoole in 1659, is thought to be the first book illustrated for children, designed as a method of teaching Latin. At the same time it could be described as a forerunner of the modern picture encyclopaedia, as it contains a compendium of every kind of thing a child might observe in his daily life.

John Ogilby's AESOP'S FABLES (1665) is a beautiful example of any early English collection. Fifty-two of the full page illustrations are etchings by the famous artist, Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677). They are considered among his best work, charming, humorous and of superb carftsmanship.

AESOP'S FABLES (London, 1723) by John Locke is printed interlinearily in English and Latin, "... for the benefit of those who not having a master, would learn either of these Tongues ..." It proves the value given in those days the fables as a means of teaching morals and languages, in this case to a large, less privileged segment of society.

Another variation to make the achievement of knowledge more fun, is shown here in the charming small volume, ÉSOPE EN BELLE HUMEUR, ou FABLES D'ÉSOPE MISES EN VAUDEVILLE (Paris, early 19th century), where the verses are intended to be sung to well known tunes.

The 17th century French poet Jean de La Fontaine wrote his fables in verse. Most of them were new versions of Aesop's fables; but those written in later years were largely his own creation. His FABLES (Paris, 1838) in two volumes are illustrated by J.J. Granville, an artist greatly in demand at the time.

The ORIGINAL FABLES OF LA FONTAINE (New York, 1913), rendered into English by F.C. Tilney and illustrated by the translator, are limited to La Fontain's own composition.

At the same time as the fables were increasing in popularity another type of illustrated book was developing, the emblem book. It uses objects from the every day world to illustrate divine truths and moral lessons. John Bunyan's DIVINE EMBLEMS or TEMPORAL THINGS SPIRITUALIZED, originally published under the title, A book for boys and girls or Country rhymes for children (1686) seems to have been one of the first emblem books intended for the young. It was republished with illustrations in 1724. The edition on display dates from about 1790.

John Bunyan (1628-1688) is most famous for his PILGRIM'S PROGRESS (1678) written during the twelve years he spent in jail. Youngsters were attracted to the book because of the vivid description of strange visions and adventures. A facsimile of the first edition is on display. The other edition shown is illustrated with 29 watercolor paintings by William Blake (1757-1827), which were printed for the first time in New York, in 1941.

FABLES AND EARLY PICTURE BOOKS (case 2)

Blake's SONGS OF INNOCENCE (1789), written and illustrated by the poet, show a decided break away from the strict rule of reason and preaching in children's literature up to that date. The romantic movement was starting to make itself felt in the writing of legends and fairytales.

The charm of miniature books was also used to entice young people to read otherwise unattractive moralizing lessons. Under the magnifying glass is one of these gems, tentatively established as ÉTRENNES A L'INNOCENCE (Paris, ca. 1815) This exceptionally small almanack is engraved throughout and delightfully illustrated with plates. It is bound in green morocco leather with gold-tooled flower design on both covers. Actual size: 7/8 x 5/8 x 3/16 of an inch.

THE AFFECTIONATE PARENT'S GIFT AND THE GOOD CHILD'S REWARD, (London, 1838) by Henry S. Horsley gives a pertinent summary of the aims of a certain type of literature for children during the Victorian era as "... calculated to lead the tender minds of youth in early-practice of Virtue and piety, and thereby promote their Prosperity and eternal Happiness." This type of writing is also represented here by Sarah K. Trimmer's NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE LESSONS ... (London, 1835) and Maria Edgeworth THE PARENT'S ASSISTANT OF STORIES FOR CHILDREN (Halifax, Eng., 1862) and EARLY LESSONS (London, 18--) illustrated by F.A. Fraser. Also on display is a facsimile of the title page of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (London, 1811) by Charles Lamb.

THE BUTTERFLY'S BALL AND THE GRASSHOPPER'S FEAST (London, 1807) was written by the historian and accomplished botanist, William Roscoe (1753-1831) for one of his seven sons, "little Robert", to awaken and further the child's interest in nature. A happy and refreshing trend began for children's books when it was published in 1807. Its great success was proved by the publication in the same year of The peacock "At home", and The lion's masquerade written by a Lady (Catherine Anne Dorset) and The elephant's ball by one W.B. The volume on display contains facsimile reproductions of the original editions printed for J. Harris, Successor to E. Newberry.

Not quite as amusing but welcomed by youngsters and their elders alike were the numerous nature books of the Victorian era. Attractively illustrated and informative, they urge the whole family to take an interest in the natural beauty of the world around them. A good example is the Rev. W. Haughton's SEASIDE WALKS OF A NATURALIST WITH HIS CHILDREN (London, 1870).

LEGENDS FROM THE OLD & NEW WORLD (case 3)

When William Caxton printed the great classic of Arthurian legend, Sir Thomas Malory's MORTE D'ARTHUR (1485) it was, like other works of Romance, not intended for children. But the haunting prose and barbaric beauty of the legends attracted the young and Malory's version was the chief source for many adaptations during the subsequent centuries. Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872-1898) illustrated this de luxe reprint (London, 1893-1894) and designed the binding.

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Aba Bayefsky's beautiful prints, LEGENDS OF THE CREE INDIANS, (Toronto, 1969), represent most impressively the mystery and richness of the native tradition in Canada.

THE FIRST CANADIAN CHRISTMAS CAROL (published in this edition in 1927) is traditionally attributed to Jean de Brébeuf, missionary to the Huron Indians from 1629 until his death in 1649.

The traditions of the native peoples of Central America are represented in miniature by LEYENDAS DE GUATEMALA (Madrid, 1968)

Another great classic among lengends is the Germanic Nibelungen Saga, made extremely popular by Richard Wagner, when he wrote the words and music of the famous Ring cycle, at the end of the last century. SIEGFRIED & THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS (London, 1930) illustrated by Arthur Rackham, is on display.

Padraic Colum collected Polynesian legends and myths for the Hawaiian government in 1922, to provide a traditional background for the islands' schoolbooks; at the same time he gave to the literature of folklore and fairytales a charming addition, AT THE GATEWAYS OF THE DAY (London, 1924) illustrated by Juliette M. Fraser.

FABULOUS ADVENTURES (case 4)

Daniel Defoe's masterpiece ROBINSON CRUSOE (1719) is not only an exiting narrative about one man's survival but also a study in soul-searching and discovering of an inner strength and belief in the Creator. This colorful adventure has held the interest of generations. Artists have illustrated and writers imitated the castaway's tales many times over. THE LIFE & STRANGE SURPRISING ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE OF YORK, MARINER (London, 1790) is an early illustrated edition; the other (London, 1895) was illustrated by John Butler Yeats (1839-1922) better known for his portrait painting.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616) wrote Don Quixote de La Mancha (1605) to ridicule the sentimental romances of chivalry; because he put so much life and absurdity into his writing, children soon found the tales much more to their liking than most books especially designed for them. The first English translation appeared in 1612, and from the end of the 18th century onward abridgments and retellings were published for youngsters around the globe. On display is an eighteenth century edition (London, 1740) and a modern edition published by the Nonesuch Press (London, 1930), illustrated by E. McKnight Kauffer.

Jonathan Swift's (1617-1745) TRAVELS INTO SEVERAL REMOTE NATIONS OF THE WORLD, BY LEMUEL GULLIVER better known as Gulliver's Travels, was first published in England in 1726. It was a satire, aimed at enlightening humanity in a none too kindly spirit. The appeal for children lies undoubtedly in the tales setting in the topsy-turvy world of fantasy. Translations and editions are countless. On exhibit is a first edition and two much later ones, illustrated by Arthur Rackham (London, 1904) and by Willy Pogany (1919).

ARABIAN NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENTS, or THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS, came to be known in Europe in the late 17th century. The first French translation by Antoine Galland (1645-1715), a diplomat and scholar, appeared in 1704. The edition on display was published in 1792-1798, some 60 years after the translator's death. A number of tales found among his papers by the publisher were printed here for the first time. The most accurate and comprehensive translation of the Arabian Nights, entitled THE BOOK OF THOUSAND NIGHTS AND A NIGHT, is the work of Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) and created a scandal when it was privately published in 1885. Certainly in this form the fabulous folktales from various Eastern sources could not be offered to children, but in many more or less expurgated versions they have enchanted young listeners and inspired excellent artists. On display are:
FAIRYTALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, edited by E. Dixon, illustrated by J.D. Batten (London, 1893).
THE MAGIC HORSE AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, and STORIES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, both retold by Laurence Housman with drawings by Edmund Dulac (New York, London & Toronto, 1911).
Also shown is a German version MÄRCHEN AUS TAUSENDUNDEINE NACHT, retold by Walter Bauer, illustrated by Kurt Wendtland (Stuttgart, 1962).

ALL TIME FAVORITES (cases 5 and 6)

Perrault's MOTHER GOOSE'S TALES were first published in France in 1697. The two-volume set is a facsimile of the original manuscript edition. The title page bears no author's name, the frontispiece depicts an old woman surrounded by children, and on the wall behind them there is a plaque reading: LES CONTES DE MA MERE L'OYE, which gives the title to the collection. It contains Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding-Hood, Blue Beard, Puss-in Boots, and Diamonds and Toads.

Nursery Rhymes and jingles were sung or chanted long before they were put into print. Many of the today's favorites are believed to have originated as hidden political slogans, frequently using rather lewd language. But this was forgotten, and the verses were accepted as fun and nonsence very suitable for carefree hours in the nursery.

Edward Lear (1812-1888), poet and illustrator, brought the triumph of nonsence into children's literature with THE BOOK OF NONSENSE (1846) and MORE NONSENSE. He was surpassed in popularity only by Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), known to generations as Lewis Carroll, created a most delightful combination of fairytale like adventures and utter nonsense with an undercurrent of hidden meanings for the more sophisticated reader. The book was written and carfully illustrated by the author for his little friend Alice Liddell, in 1863, and was Originally called ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDER GROUND. A facsimile of the manuscript is shown. Carroll did not consider his illustrations good enough for publication, and John Tenniel illustrated the first edition THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS (1872). Many artists have since added their work to enhance the charm of the adventures of Alice.

The books in case 6 reflect the revolution in printing and book production, started by William Morris in the last part of the 19th century.

Stories by Beatrice Potter, and A.A. Milne are shown along with facsimiles of the author's manuscripts. Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway and Rudyard Kipling illustrated their own books. Other wellknown writers, such as Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame and "Uncle Remus" inspired a succession of illustrators.

FAIRYTALES OF MANY LANDS (case 7)

Not many words are needed to present "Fairytales of many Lands". The colorful display speaks for itself, with its imaginative bindings and illustrations by superb craftsmen and artists. Of special interest are the JAPANESE FAIRY-TALES (London, 1888) [told in English by B.H. Chamberlain and others] which are printed on one side of double leaves folded once in Japanese style.

Here might be the place to introduce a few of the illustrators frequently appearing in this exhibition.

Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) was considered one of the finest illustrators of his time. His drawings and watercolors have an eerie dreamlike quality, so well suited to accompany tales about good fairies and evil spirits. This otherworldly atmosphere is well represented in the books on exhibit. The artist was still at work on the Wind in the Willows, shown in the previous case, when he died.

Edmund Dulac (1882-1953) was originally intended for a law career, but loved painting so much that he decided to make it his livelihood instead. His de luxe illustrated giftbooks were as much sought after as those of his contemporary, Arthur Rackham. Dulac, a naturalized Englishman, was a very versatile artist; he painted portraits, drew caricatures, designed stage sets and costumes. He also designed French and British postage stamps, including the British Coronation stamp of 1937.

Edward Ardizzone was born in China in 1900, the son of a French-Italian father and Scottish mother and now lives in England. As a young man after finishing school, he was forced to take a job in an office, but his great love was painting. At the age of 26 he, with his father's help could finally take up art as a full time occupation. He became a prolific illustrator. During World War II he was an official war artist, seeing action in Europe and Africa. About 300 paintings from that period of his life are in museums in London. He is regarded as the foremost contemporary British illustrator of children's books.

Ernest Howard Shepard, born in London 1879, began to draw when he was still a very small child. He studied art, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1901 for the first time. His prominence as illustrator came with his drawings for the Winnie-the-Pooh books in the nineteen-twenties. He also illustrated his own books for children.

MODERN CANADIANA (case 8)

The items on display in this case are from the library's collection of Canadiana. They show how far children's books have developed from 17th century textbooks with a few vignettes to modern picture books with very little text at all.

Edith F. Fowke collected songs, rhymes and games of Canadian children in SALLY GO ROUND THE SUN (Toronto, 1969), colorfully illustrated by Carlos Marchiori.

The Toronto artist Charles Pachter produced MORNING SONG (Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 1965) while studying at the Cranbrook Academy in Michigan. He also illustrated Dennis Lee's WIGGLE TO THE LAUNDROMAT (Toronto, 1970).

THE WIND HAS WINGS; poems from Canada (Toronto, 1968) was compiled by Mary A. Downie and Barbara Robertson, with illustrations by Elizabeth Cleaver, one of Canada's most talented young illustrators.

It is most regrettable that fewer artists and writers seem to give their efforts to children's books these days. Books enjoyed at an early age influence the tastes and interests of the young generation as strongly today as they did centuries ago. No television programme can ever be a substitute for a book of fairytales created with love and understanding.

The designs on the first and last page are from the Birdsall Collection of Bookbinders' finishing tools at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library.

The framed illustrations outside the show cases are designed for a planned children's book about the wildflowers of Ontario.

Various items in the exhibition have been loaned by staff members.